

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

THE APPEAL TO CAESAR.

October 15, 1916. Acts, Chapter 25.

Golden Text: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as master, and the servant as his Lord." Matt. 10:25.

Felix, about whom we studied in our last lesson was probably one of the worst governors who ever ruled over Palestine. He made himself very objectionable to the Jews and there was great dissatisfaction with him on their part. He seems to have had no regard for right or justice, and acted always only from selfish and wicked motives. He was recalled to Rome because of his bad administration, and he was very much afraid of the charges that the Jews might make against him. As he had kept Paul in prison for two years, hoping to please them, so when he left Caesarea he left Paul still in prison.

He was succeeded by Festus as governor. Three days after Festus reached Caesarea, the political capital of the province, he went up to Jerusalem, which was the religious capital. He probably had two motives for this. One was to show consideration to the Jews and their ecclesiastical rulers and the other was to gain information in regard to conditions there.

Notwithstanding the fact that Paul had been kept in prison during the two years since he had been carried away from Jerusalem, the high priests and the other Jews had not forgotten him nor had their enmity toward him diminished, and so they tried to induce Festus to have him brought to Jerusalem. This was proposed in order that he might there be tried before Festus, but in reality it was in order that they might waylay him on the road and kill him. Festus would not yield to their request, saying that Paul was to be kept at Caesarea. Whether he understood the motives of the Jews or not we cannot tell. At any rate, the charge against Paul which would have weight with him was that he had taught the people to believe that there was another king, instead of Caesar; and, as that was an offense against the Roman law, he should be tried before the Roman court, and Caesarea was the place at which that court held its sessions.

Festus was entirely willing to give them the opportunity of presenting any evidence that they had against him, and told them that they could go to Caesarea and testify against Paul if they wished to do so. Festus shows his willingness to gratify the Jews in this matter by having Paul brought to trial the day after he returned to Caesarea. The Jews who had come down with him as witnesses of Paul made many charges against Paul and charges which they were unable to prove. Paul was allowed to speak for himself and he denied the charges which were made and said that he had neither offended against the law of the Jews, nor had he profaned the temple, nor had he done anything contrary to the law of Caesar. No doubt Paul went over very much the same ground in this offense that he covered two years before with Felix. Festus not finding anything proven against him and still anxious to do what the Jews wanted done as far as he could, he asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand his trial there before him. Paul knew very well what that would mean, and he was not willing to commit himself to the hands of the Jews. He said that he stood before Caesar's

judgment and there he ought to be judged; that he had done no wrong to the Jews and appealed to Festus himself to confirm that statement. He said that if it were proven that he had committed any wrong, he would have nothing to say why the sentence of death should not be passed upon him, but as long as these charges were not proven he was not willing that he should be delivered into the hands of the Jews. In order to prevent that being done he took advantage of his Roman citizenship, and appealed unto Caesar. One of the privileges which belonged to a Roman citizen was that he could demand trial before Caesar himself. Festus was obliged to grant this appeal of Paul's. Festus was really just as much at a loss to know what to do about Paul as Felix had been, except that Festus seemed to be honest enough to want to do him justice.

After some days, during which time Paul still remained in prison, Agrippa, king over that section of country and Bernice, his wife, came to visit Festus, and whilst there Festus told him about Paul, and that he had appealed to Caesar. He told him also how he had tried the case, and that he would have let him go, but Paul had appealed to Caesar and there was nothing to do but to send him to Caesar. He told him also that the questions which the Jews raised, and upon which these charges were based were, as he said, superstitions about one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul claimed had arisen to life. These things he considered of no consequence, but there was no course open for him but to send Paul to Caesar, as he had appealed unto him. Agrippa expressed the desire that he might himself hear Paul, so on the next day Paul was sent for and Agrippa and Bernice, his wife, came with great pomp into the judgment hall with the chief captains and leading men of the city, and Festus had Paul brought before him. He explained to King Agrippa and the others who were present the state of the case, and claimed that he had not been able to decide whether the charges were right or not, but said that he had not found that he had committed anything worthy of death. In sending Paul to Caesar as a prisoner it would be necessary to prefer some charge against him, and what troubled him now was what charge to prefer. He said that he wanted Agrippa to formulate the charge, and for this reason he had Paul brought before him.

The next chapter gives Paul's very remarkable speech before Agrippa and Festus.

"PROVE ME NOW HEREWITH."

If any Christian who has never tried tithing will make the experiment, following it through to the end in prosperity and adversity, we predict for him two surprises: First, he will be astonished at the increased amount which by this method he is enabled to give to the Lord; and, secondly, he will be astonished at the increased spiritual and temporal prosperity which the Lord will give to him.—A. J. Gordon.

A CONDITION OF SUCCESS.

We have to repent of and relinquish individual and national sins before we can hope for any real advance. Among these is the alcoholic crime which is exhausting national resources in money and food and men, and preventing military success. Britain will never achieve a decisive victory till the infamous drink traffic is prohibited.—Irish Presbyterian.

Keep your face always towards the sunshine and the shadows will fall behind you.—M. B. Whitman.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

M., Oct. 9. Civic pride. Acts 21:37-39.
T., Oct. 10. Cleansing a city. Mal. 4:1-6.
W., Oct. 11. Passion for civic purity. Jer. 33:1-9.
T., Oct. 12. Love of the people. Rom. 11:13-36.
F., Oct. 13. High-minded officials. 2 Sam. 23:1-7.
S., Oct. 14. The coming city. Rev. 21:10-27.
S., Oct. 15. Topic—Public Spirit, and How to Cultivate It. Ps. 122:1-9. (Citizenship Sunday.)

Why should we be interested in politics?
What is public spirit?
How can we learn the facts about community, State, and nation?

Civic pride means pride in the community in which we live, whether it be limited to our own immediate neighborhood, or our city, to our State, or to our country. No man is a true citizen unless he has civic pride, delighting in what there is good in his country, and striving earnestly to make it better. Every true citizen will try to improve the conditions in which he lives, whether it be in country or city. Because there are more people in the city than in the same area in the country there is more need for effort on the part of the citizen and more hope for doing work which will accomplish good. For this reason most writers in speaking of such matters deal with the city, but there is just as much real need for work of this kind in the country as in the city. City streets should be kept clean and in good condition, and so country roads should be made good and attractive. City yards and homes should be clean and homelike, and so ought those in the country to be.

This cleanliness in the community should not apply only to material things, but it should apply also to morals. Every man ought to live a pure moral life himself and then in every way possible bring about the same life in others. This can be done chiefly through personal influence on the part of those who have the good of the community at heart, but wise laws are necessary and helpful, and the good citizen ought to use his influence to secure the adoption of such laws. Good laws will be of no avail unless there are high-minded officials to carry them out. One great difficulty about making and enforcing the laws is that the voters who select those who make and execute the laws are not sufficiently careful about the character of the men who are chosen for this purpose. When the people of any community show purity in their own lives, and unselfish love of their fellowmen, they will be governed by the highest motives in the selection of their public officers, and these officers will be guided in the same way in fulfilling the trust committed to them.

It is important for every individual to make a study of the state of public affairs, so that he may know just what is needed and just what can be done. He should work in conjunction with others who have the same ends in view.

All that has been said thus far has no regard to what should be done by the citizen as an individual. There are many civic organizations with which the individual might connect himself, and which will accomplish a good deal in the community, and any community that has no such organization should form one. But matters of this kind do not belong to the church in its organized capacity. The work of the church is to preach the gospel of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to build up men and women in holy lives. The work of the church is to make character in the individual and so fit him for all his duties and responsibilities in life. The church has nothing to do with government affairs. It should ever be kept separate and distinct from the State in

all of its work. It is the duty of the State to make laws for the government of all the people and to see that these laws are executed. It is the duty of the State to see that roads and streets are built and kept in good condition. It is the duty of the State to make and enforce laws for the general well-being of all the people, to prevent crime and to punish the criminal. The duty of the church is to make character, which should fit men for service in the church, in the State, in the community, in the home. Whenever the church goes into civic matters it is trespassing upon forbidden ground, and trouble will invariably follow.

What is said of the church applies to every department of it, and so it includes the young people's societies. The leaders of these societies should bear in mind that they have a most responsible position and that they have the most important work that is committed to men, that of training souls for God's service. Do not waste effort in using the small amount of time which the society has in doing things of minor importance. Train the boy or girl in the high principles of the religion of the Lord Jesus, and civic matters will take care of themselves. A truly converted man or woman will not be satisfied to live in a dirty home, when he has been once shown the beauty of the Christian life; and when the man is brought to God the better citizen he will be, and the more anxious he will be to perform his duty as a citizen. The young people's societies should be like a manufacturing establishment where the best grade of sharp-edged tools are made for the carpenter. It would be foolish for the manufacturer of these tools to turn aside from making them to begin building houses. He makes the tools and sends them forth to do their work, and so let the societies make men and women true to the high standard of God and send them forth into the world to do their work in the home, in their business, in the community and in the world.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR IN VIRGINIA.

Pastors and workers of churches with Christian Endeavor Societies and those without organized young people's work should be interested in the coming to Virginia of Wyatt A. Taylor, of Columbia, S. C., field secretary of the All-South Extension Committee for a series of meetings from November 15th to December 20th. Every section of the State will be visited and a special effort will be made to reach the young people outside of the better organized centers. Those interested should write promptly to the State president, W. J. Finch, Newport News, and arrange for a meeting. Mr. Taylor as president of the South Carolina Union has inspired the young people to splendid progress and should have fine results in Virginia. Presbyterians will be specially interested as at the Atlanta Convention denominational rally it was decided to work for a total of one thousand societies to be reported at the 1917 New York Convention. There are nearly seven hundred now, not including the two hundred and fifty U. S. A. The plan to raise funds for two Presbyterian Christian Endeavor foreign missionaries, started by the South Carolina Endeavorers after being approved by Dr. Egbert W. Smith, is complete and funds are coming in.

Davidson College: P. D. Price is president of the newly organized Christian Endeavor Society of the college; W. C. Cumming, vice-president; J. T. Maddrey, corresponding secretary; B. F. Shields, secretary and treasurer. Mr. Carl Lehmann was here